

## **Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Feedback 1/30 – 2/12/2021**

\*\*\* If you supply your name and/or hamlet, it will be shared with the Advisory Committee as well as online. \*\*\*

### **Received Monday, February 1 via web form**

**Name (optional)**      **Field not completed.**

**Hamlet (optional)**      **Delmar**

**Feedback (9999 characters max)**      I appreciate all of the work you all are doing to understand the important issue of police reform and how you are working together to develop solutions. I have appreciated all of the updates you shared. I just read the article below and watched the video about the 9 year-old girl in Rochester and her interaction with the police. As I watched it, I thought about my work in schools and how behavior issues can quickly escalate. I thought this article might be a good shared source for the committee to discuss what might lead to this situation being handled this way, what can be put in place so it doesn't happen again, how are the officers are feeling/what they are thinking as things escalate, what other options were there, etc. I know everyone on the committee is looking to make things better and I think using a concrete and real example can be a helpful way to hear different ideas. Thanks again for all of your work!

Article:

[https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/01/us/rochester-police-pepper-spray-child/index.html?utm\\_content=2021-02-01T10%3A00%3A12&utm\\_source=twCNN&utm\\_term=link&utm\\_medium=social](https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/01/us/rochester-police-pepper-spray-child/index.html?utm_content=2021-02-01T10%3A00%3A12&utm_source=twCNN&utm_term=link&utm_medium=social)

### **Received Tuesday, February 2 via web form**

**Name (optional)**      **Barb Riegel**

**Hamlet (optional)**      **Elsmere**

**Feedback (9999 characters max)**      Police reform and reinvention in Bethlehem is an important opportunity to change the status quo.

Police reform must include a civilian oversight board. Transparency and subpoena power is necessary to move forward. Secrecy and coverup of misconduct, inappropriate use of force, petty dealings do not move us forward.

Social workers and mental health professionals must be employed to address an escalating crisis in our country. Utilizing those with the greatest expertise is essential to move forward.

Rooting out beliefs of white supremacy and racial profiling is of absolute necessity to move forward.

While officials in Bethlehem seem like they want to create a document to move forward, we cannot do that without acknowledging our own history of being a sunset town, fueling stereotypes of POC and profiling POC as dangers to our lives in Bethlehem. For far too long, racism and white privilege have been a bastion of our town, which need to be torn down and reimagined, reinvented.

Thank you.

[Received Sunday, February 7 via web form](#)

**Name (optional)**      **Taxpayer**

**Hamlet (optional)**      **Delmar**

**Feedback (9999 characters max)**      After watching the videos and reading the feedback on the Police Reform and Reinvention Advisory Committee, there seems to be a common denominator. This is just a platform for residents to complain about the Bethlehem Police Department. To be asking questions regarding the type and length of training an officer receives, to how many tickets are issued in town, seems like a waste of everyone's time.

The police officers, throughout the states, receive the same extensive training in all facets of policing within communities, cities, etc. Each officer, when dealing with a situation from domestic violence to drug deals, to assisting the mentally ill, knows what needs to happen next and people aren't running into each other trying to figure what the next course of action needs to be taken. To imply that a police officer is just trained on how to issue tickets and is handed a gun is so insulting.

The Bethlehem Police Department has always demonstrated that they are well trained professionals, who have to face unknown dangers when patrolling our neighborhoods. From the student who is stalking and makes inappropriate moves on another student, to the resident who has mental issues and threatens to shoot the police who are trying to help them, to the neighbor who is a sex offender and taking pictures of your kids while playing in your yard, to the student selling drugs to other students while at school, to the senior citizens who are being taken advantage of by a close family member, to the most recent incident of the person calling St. Thomas School and stating "All God's children are going to pay," there is a lot of evil happening in the Town of Bethlehem. Now, whether the residents want to acknowledge these events... I have heard more than one resident state that they don't want to hear it. That doesn't happen in our town. Wake up people, it is happening.

I hope the remainder of these meetings focuses on supporting the Bethlehem Police Department and identifying ways to educate the residents, students, teachers, etc. on how and why the police perform their duties a certain way, which is not racially motivated. Yes, it is imperative for the residents to respect what this police department has to deal with on a daily basis and not criticize decisions that have to be made in a split second. There is not always time to call and wait for the crises unit to assist with a mentally disturbed person who is waving a

gun around. Members of the community can't think that they can just "talk" to someone to deescalate the situation. Our police officers are trained to handle these situations and we need to respect and support these professionals. The community should try to do a better job of parenting their children and not expecting the police officers to have that discussion with the children because the parent wants to be the friend and not the parent, and then turn around and criticize the police department for any given reason. The community has to work harder as well.

**Name (optional)** Julie J.

**Hamlet (optional)** Slingerlands

**Feedback (9999 characters max)** I find it interesting that the new chief of Police is not leading these discussions after stating she has 20+ years as a police officer. The chief's participation is negligible and very often showing a lack of interest in the entire discussion. It would seem the chief has been a part of the department long enough to know how things are done and should be very specific on recommendations to the committee to improve relations between the department and the community. After all, isn't that why the Town Board appointed her chief – because the "New" police department would be more community oriented. So far all we have heard is that the officers are good people. To keep relying on the other commanders to answer the questions directed her way seems to indicate ignorance, arrogance, or both. Why aren't the other officers' names, who participate at each meeting, listed on the advisory committee? Why does the supervisor feel compelled to field questions directed to the chief? And finally, why does this chief feel the need to condemn the previous chief when she has no specific agenda for improvements for this "New" police department. Seems like all talk and no action from this new chief.

[Received Monday, February 8 via web form](#)

**Name (optional)** Field not completed.

**Hamlet (optional)** Elsmere

**Feedback (9999 characters max)** 1. There need to be stipulated consequences for hate speech by an officer on the job, or on or off the job while on social media.

2. Mental health consultant trainers should be hired as trainers to educate officers on differentiating behaviors that are part of psychiatric crises vs. criminality. Sometimes it is difficult and a person threatening harm or brandishing a weapon must obviously be taken seriously and dealt with in a timely manner, in either case. Officers are entitled to more training and expertise and we all are entitled to more skillful policing.

3. The issue of School Resource officers, cops in the school, is very personal to me. I signed my own son out of BCHS because of the dreadful conduct of a school resource officer. My son was in the cafeteria and got into a conflict with 2 other kids that was not physical but getting ugly

and he and two kids got sent off to the principal's office. After some time there, with the school resource officer in attendance as well, they were told to return to classes. My son had a panic attack and could not move and said so. The cop grabbed him and started shoving him out the door. My son elbowed the SRO to try to push him off, and was promptly arrested. I signed my son out of school because of that recklessness, the school could not be trusted. A well regarded public interest attorney subsequently said that we should have sued. However, we were busy recalibrating his education mid-stream. What is the job description of an SRO, where are the regulations and rules of the position. Or is it just a free range, roam the school and be an authority figure? BTW, my son is now a PhD candidate in computer science and cognitive science, a scholar, not a criminal.